

UDK 130.2:165.75:781

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Mémoire: on Music and Deconstruction

Spomin: o glasbi in dekonstrukciji

Ključne besede: estetika, alegorija, kritična teorija, dekonstrukcija, razlika, ideologija, glasba, muzikologija, teorija glasbe, analiza glasbe, organicizem, postmodernizem, poststrukturalizem, semiotika, enovitost

Keywords: aesthetics, allegory, critical theory, deconstruction, difference, ideology, music, musicology, music theory and analysis, organicism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, semiotics, unity

POVZETEK

Raziskave pogostih poststrukturalističnih implikacij o interpretaciji glasbe so vidno prispevale k širitvi skupine diskurzov anglo-ameriške muzikologije v zadnjih dobrih dvajsetih letih. Težnja, ki se je pokazala v poznih 1980-ih, je povezana najbolj izrazito z mlajšo generacijo analitikov glasbe, ki skuša premisliti posledice postmoderne kritične misli v odnosu do uveljavljenih kanonov sistematične teorije glasbe.

Kot prikazuje vrsta prereзов od Monelle (1992), Krims (1998), Ayrey (1998) in Norris (2000), je njene najbolj produktivne rezultate mogoče kodificirati v razmerju do splošne kritike estetske ideologije. Vendar pa so bile politične posledice, utelešene v tovrstnih raziskovalnih pristopih, v 1990-ih večinoma razpršene znotraj ohlapno opredeljene 'Nove muzikologije', ko so bili učinki spreminjenosti nanovo naravnani po kritičnem programu, zasnovanem na politikah individualiziranih identitet.

ABSTRACT

The exploration of poststructuralism's likely implications for musical interpretation has formed a distinctive contribution to the expanding ensemble of discourses admitted to Anglo-American musicology over the course of the past twenty years. A trend manifest since the later 1980s, its potential was sensed most strongly by a younger generation of music analysts concerned to trace the reflexive consequences of postmodern critical thought for the established canons of systematic theory.

As acknowledged in a series of overview surveys by Monelle (1992), Krims (1998), Ayrey (1998) and Norris (2000), its most productive outcomes may be codified in relation to a generalised critique of aesthetic ideology. However, the political consequences embodied in such modes of enquiry were largely displaced within a loosely defined 'New Musicology' throughout the 1990s as the effects of alterity became realigned with a critical programme based on individualised identity politics.

Razvejevanje razlik se nadaljuje v debatah o naravi glasbene enovitosti (na primer v delih Agawuja, Chua, Dubiela, Korsyna, Kramerja, Morgana in drugih). Članek si prizadeva pokazati, da posredniški vlogi umetnostne oblike ne bi smeli dovoliti, da prikrije emancipatorično moč dekonstrukcije, kot jo je uveljavil Derrida. V tem oziru kaže razumeti uporništvo poststrukturalizma videti kot značilno za zagovor akademskega statusa muzikologije v času, ko disciplini grozi institucionalen konec.

The ramifications of difference continue to inform critical debate regarding the nature of musical unity (for instance, in the work of Agawu, Chua, Dubiel, Korsyn, Kramer, Morgan and others). However, this paper argues that the mediating role of artistic form ought not to be permitted to obscure the emancipatory capacity of deconstruction as affirmed by Derrida. In this respect, the message of resistance inscribed within poststructuralism should be seen as emblematic for the defence of musicology's academic status at a time when the discipline remains under threat of institutional closure.

In a recent summary introduction to the work of Jacques Derrida (Smith 2005), James Smith remarks that if deconstruction is an event which never takes place without love, it is also a process ineluctably aligned with the condition of mourning. On the one hand, deconstruction names an affirmative exigency that inscribes a positive response to the call of the other. Thus in speaking of his hopes in death, an event which was itself inscribed on 9 October 2004, Derrida notes, in a typically affecting musical reference, that he would want

one thing only, and that is to lose myself in the orchestra I would form with my sons, heal, bless and seduce the whole world by playing divinely with my sons, produce with them the world's ecstasy, *their* creation. I will accept dying if dying is to sink slowly, yes, into the bottom of this beloved music. (Derrida quoted in Smith 2005: xvii)

Yet on the other, it signifies the impossibility of mourning, through the tasks of mediation and translation by which memory, in the linguistic idioms of the eulogy and the memorial tribute, is obliged to commit itself to the textual folds of narrative.

Writing in the Preface to the French edition of his Wellek Library lectures published in 1988 (Derrida 1989), Derrida also draws attention to the overlapping rhetorical patterns that link these same idioms to that of autobiography. Attempting here to give form to the relationship between music and deconstruction, such textual resonances seem to me inescapable; a series of echoes for a lost moment in Anglo-American musicology whose cultural and political implications may yet have irredeemable consequences for the discipline's academic survival. True this already belated commentary for a friend and former student at the University of Exeter will inevitably bear the negative imprints of loss and displacement attendant on the enforced closure of its Department of Music. And, as with any memorial reflection, it is bound to submit not only to the deconstructive tracing of the *mneme* of living memory by the *hypomnesis* of dead language, but also no doubt the attendant bad faith of self-absorption, self-delusion and

denial that as Pascale-Anne Brault and Michel Naas remind us (Derrida 2001) haunt the good intentions of personal testimony. However, although the I which acknowledges these failings through the figure of prosopopoeia does so under a shadow of pessimism, it also responds, as Derrida advises, with a promise ‘whose opening toward the present to come is not that of an expectation or an anticipation but that of commitment’ (Derrida 1989: 47).

For a British music theorist – analyst – working as a graduate student during the mid-1980s, the range of texts that engendered a curiosity towards deconstruction, were relatively small in number. The work of Jean-Jacques Nattiez was responsible for introducing a tradition of structuralist and semiotic thought. But if Nattiez’s 1985 essay outlining the concepts of seriation process and plot encouraged a newly relativist spirit at the level of synchronic interpretation, it was Joseph Kerman’s historicisation of the general musicological discipline that conveyed the virtue of a more thoroughgoing self-critical purpose with regard to interpretative orientation. In Kerman’s long-since familiar formulation (Kerman 1985: 17), while “semiotics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology” were then being drawn upon “only by some of the boldest of musical studies”, “post-structuralism, deconstruction, and serious feminism” had “yet to make their debuts in musicology or music theory”. In this context, the work of Christopher Norris was gratefully received as the prime example of a literary theorist conversant not only with the full panoply of postmodern critical discourse, but also its potential extension into the high canon of Western music. Hence *The Contest of Faculties* (Norris 1985) became an indispensable guide text, and ‘Utopian Deconstruction: Ernst Bloch, Paul de Man and the Politics of Music’ (Norris 1988) its most potent single-essay length distillation.

The prospects for elaborating the writings of Paul de Man for a music-theoretical community still largely untouched by shared interdisciplinary concerns were nonetheless as contingent as they seemed compelling. Without the fortuitous transatlantic perception of a Yale University-centred common cause grounded in text-based close reading, any further exploration, however ultimately beneficial, would have appeared predominantly tangential. Such is the context for my own early statement in this sphere (Street 1989). All the same, a number of other music theorists were simultaneously exhibiting their own modes of hermeneutic curiosity, thereby implying a developing momentum that would continue to gather speed and range throughout the 1990s. That an inclusive – if not altogether unanimous – spirit of adventure was beginning to gain ground was in part confirmed by the publication of an essay collection, *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music*, under the editorial guidance of Anthony Pople (Pople 1994). Yet two years earlier, an adept codification of analytical musicology’s burgeoning alignment with post-structuralism had already appeared as the concluding chapter of Raymond Monelle’s single-volume survey, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Monelle 1992).

Headed *Deconstruction and Allegory*, Monelle’s summary effectively triggered a small sub-genre of synoptic overview essays perhaps more notable for their synthetic rather than analytical content. Not that Monelle himself neglected to account for the critical purchase that deconstructive leverage might be capable of exerting both within the musical text and outside it; indeed, his survey remains convincing for the way in which the discursive embedding afforded by the Derridean lexicon of *différance*, *écriture*, trace, supplement, hymen, margin and so on is read against specific examples taken from the Western musical tradition. So, for example, the effect of the frame as the point of erasure between work and world is neatly illustrated with reference to the means by which a critical metalanguage is irreducibly folded into the autonomous structures – for instance Beethoven’s Op. 18 String Quartets as glossed by Vogler and Galeazzi – it attempts faithfully to describe. Similarly, the undecidable relationship between literal and figurative meanings so rigorously examined by de Man is exemplified with reference

to Robert Samuels's reading of the topical antinomies at work in the Scherzo of Mahler's Sixth Symphony. More important, however, than the additional warnings raised against terminological appropriation – here situated on the ground of Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 118 No. 2 as contested by Samuels again, this time in relation to a reading advanced by Robert Snarrenberg – was Monelle's articulation of the further disjunction which intervenes between commentary and composition. Thus far from achieving a metaphysical point of fusion with its desired object, any interpretation instead represents

the analyst's track through the unending codes that permit the music to be heard as a structure. Placed metonymically alongside the music, it represents an encounter between music and listener that suggestively opens the space between signifier and signified and invites the third person, who is both reader and listener, to embark on structuration. (Monelle 1992: 316)

In certain respects, this assertion carries a stronger imprint of the recommendations made by both Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco on the shift from closed work to open text than any single statement by either Derrida or de Man. Nonetheless, for a disciplinary field such as music theory and analysis still in the grip of an unreflecting concept of unity, the sense of a committed challenge to the prevailing conceptual order was eloquently reinforced. For his part, Monelle also acknowledged that the consequences of any deconstructive event should extend to a disabling of the nonconceptual order within which any conceptual framework is articulated. Yet over the six years which intervened between his survey and those assembled by Adam Krims and Craig Ayrey (Krims 1998, Ayrey 1998), it is evident that the agenda for disciplinary transformation had witnessed little in the way of decisive transformation.

If Ayrey's review article was occasioned by the most sustained text of its kind, Rose Rosengard Subotnik's *Deconstructive Variations*, Krims's essay appears to owe at least part of its inspiration to the fact that a full decade had elapsed since Snarrenberg's first venture into the deconstructive field. Taking care to contextualise the prior literary turn away from post-structuralism toward a broader-based engagement with power relations as manifest across the terrain of cultural studies, Krims registers the extent to which four music theorists, Snarrenberg, Martin Scherzinger, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Littlefield, had sought to delimit deconstructive work for the purposes of analytical close reading. Although Krims concedes Samuels's earlier criticism of Snarrenberg's attachment to a sense of self-present perception, he finds the disciplinary reflex to be equally constitutive. Consequently while Snarrenberg gestures towards some measure of interpretative defamiliarisation, his conclusions are primarily reductive; in short, Snarrenberg's naturalised acceptance of a systematic theoretical orientation means that the concept of metalanguage retains for him its essentialised status. The difference which might nonetheless make a difference is identified by the term "topicality", a concept Krims borrows from the work of Slavoj Žižek. Topicality marks the point of self-reflexive interrogation, thereby figuring the contradictory complicity of any critical discourse with its enabling frames. As Krims notes, Derrida's practice of "writing under erasure" inscribes the impossibility of a consistent topicality, of perpetual self-resistance. Yet while such a condition must remain impossibly out of reach, it also throws into relief the extent to which analytical close reading had sought to preserve the institutional status quo.

In fact Krims's highly compacted reference to Žižek's concept of the "moment" as congruent with the temporal implications of Derridean *différance* is indicative of his own enabling frame: less a wish to engage with deconstructive work per se than to trace the implicit ideo-

logical bias by which it has been used to sustain an established cultural practice within the academy. Hence both Scherzinger's reading of the finale from Mahler's Seventh Symphony and Lawrence Kramer's interpretation of the 'La malinconia' passage from Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 18 No. 6 are shown to pursue methodological ends without any sense of auto-critical awareness. That said, Krims's alternative analysis of bars 13-18 from the Beethoven finale Adagio perhaps discloses its own collusive irony in turn, even while the intention is to expose the foundationalist investment that Kramer makes in favour of an instrumental relationship between listening subject and textual object. Even so, this does allow Krims to make a telling point against any alternative assumption that "subjectivity as a general category" might be formed exclusively, or even primarily, "in musical experience" (Krims 1998: 315). And by proceeding to valorise Richard Littlefield's explicit probing of the notion of the music-analytical frame as a scaffold for the "ideologemes of Nature, organicism, and aesthetic autonomy" (Krims 1998: 317), he is able to round out his genealogical survey by identifying music analysis as a disciplinary field as yet still reluctant to recognise its socially-constructed situation.

So far as these signs might be thought definitive, then, analytical musicology in the 1990s seemingly had little new to say about its preoccupations with either textual immanence or aestheticised perception. If various scholars had sought to elaborate a different position, then their work appeared confined to relatively isolated or abstract formulations (for the sake of illustration, I name myself here). The publication of Subotnik's two essay collections in fairly rapid succession (Subotnik 1991, Subotnik 1996) might thus have been viewed more programmatically in light of the as yet uneven context into which they were received. However, Craig Ayrey's review commentary gives a clear guide as to the promise and limitations of Subotnik's standpoint. Each of Subotnik's books attests to the breadth of her concerns, as much defined by a desire for social justice in North America as by a compulsion to explicate music's mediated character. In this respect, her own career history is itself regarded emblematically; first as the non-tenurable apostasy of a music historian turned Adorno scholar, and latterly as the promptings of a cultural relativist keen to deflect Adornian claims on behalf of aesthetic modernism towards a more inclusive sense of subjective engagement. Examined between the empathetic pages of *Music Analysis*, and by a reader as theoretically attuned as Ayrey, therefore, such factors might have been thought to take on an entirely positive value. In the event, his appraisal is generally more ambivalent, and ultimately weighted towards enhanced close reading as a predominantly formalist pursuit.

The materialist critique called for by Krims is firmly apparent in Subotnik's attempt to deconstruct the supposed cognitive valued embodied in structural listening. As Ayrey observes, Subotnik willingly confronts the modernist legacy of Schoenberg-Adorno by proposing a relativised perceptual strategy grounded in stylistic contingency. True, the attendant gains in favour of sensuous, expressive, emotional and verbalisable responses may seem thoroughly democratic in spirit. Yet as Ayrey concludes, their implications are culturally essentialist on at least two key counts: on the one hand in as much as they might debar an intentional preference *for* structural listening, and on the other in so far as they merely invert the Adornian imperative through an "insistence on the universality of immediacy" which could therefore amount to a form of complicity "with [...] prevailing social conditions" (Ayrey 1998: 348).

Such claims might also seem to fall short of any detailed evaluation of musical experience. On this point, however, Subotnik presents something more of a *tours de force*, in sum contested readings of Chopin's A major Prelude Op. 28 No. 7 that altogether run for 119 pages. Here the purpose is avowedly ambitious: nothing less than a deconstructive reshaping of the

text according to the conflicting polarities of freedom and contingency in a postmodern age. Ayrey's synoptic reading is largely exemplary, the effects of mediating structural articulation being tabulated in a parallel sequence of seven key points divided according to their objective and subjective derivations. But whereas he adjudges Subotnik to conceive of deconstruction as a means of compensating "for various types of lack of prohibition in Adorno" (Ayrey 1998: 355), even "a more gentle, less confrontational, and perhaps more immediately humane application of Adorno's dialectical method" (Ayrey 1998: 356), his response is not to question the critical cost so much as to attempt to refine the activity of close reading from within. The issue is not surrendered immediately. For instance, his recognition that Subotnik is "incorrigibly ideological" in so far as no new meaning is generated by her analysis "other than the 'subjectivity' proposed in advance" (Ayrey 1998: 363), is in turn matched at the level of the text by the suggestion that *différance* most likely "becomes a conceptual strategy in instrumental music only when musical culture is thoroughly implicated in the device of writing, when that culture becomes subject to a grammatology that deploys rhetoric (in the modern sense) rather than logic – say, in the early nineteenth century" (Ayrey 1998: 358). But the interpretation of the A major Prelude that he subsequently assembles, for all its elegance and ingenuity, is fatally compromised by its declared instrumental purpose. Thus in terms already interrogated by Krims, Ayrey is compelled to assert that the "crucial deconstructive operation applied to music theory as Concept [...] is to prise method from the system it exemplifies, to use method as a tool rather than as a machine" (Ayrey 1998: 376).

Still in thrall to the seemingly unbreakable spell of its ideological past, analytical musicology might be thought to have misread both its motives and capacity for engaging with deconstructive theory. Indeed in the most recent capsule summary, it is slightly surprising, even refreshing, to read that while this is "a specialised area of research [...] whose appeal is mainly to the younger generation of music theorists", its influence "is already apparent in the widespread questioning of analytical methods" (Norris 2000: 126). If Christopher Norris's dictionary entry for the second edition of *The New Grove* was bound in part to record the ways in which deconstructive work in music had followed his own prior lead, his survey also captures the most effective consequences of its autocritical potential. For if analytical practice seemed incapable of transforming its normative identity, the acknowledgement of its dependence on what de Man had termed the aesthetic ideology was far more pervasive at the level of theory. As Norris relates, a complex of logocentric meanings could be challenged by placing a destabilising emphasis on music's material and temporal – that is, metonymic – condition: the status of organicism as a master trope; the generic hierarchy sustaining the image of a privileged canon; the reduction of heterogeneous experience to purely formal apprehension; the assimilation of work to history and history to work that encourages a hegemonic belief in certain species of compositional method and style; the centralisation of the Germanic canon as the consummate expression of the nineteenth-century *Zeitgeist*; and the naturalisation of a mythology wherein spiritual truth, unity, freedom and necessity could be equated with the cultural forms of a dominant political power. In concrete terms, the performative readings conducted in this vein, Norris also notes, tended to focus on instances of textual aporia, antinomies, paradoxes and contradictions apparent within their chosen sources – in effect, the kinds of preoccupation that might have been deemed characteristic of American deconstruction in general. Nevertheless, the prospect, as Monelle recognised, for beginning to think outside the non-conceptual space within which such conceptual oppositions had been formed still lacked any surer orientation than perhaps the desire for a prolonged open questioning of the host discipline which had brought them into being.

None of which is to suppose that the early 1990s seemed anything other than an exciting and energising time for a music-theoretical tradition gradually becoming more aware of its expanding critical horizons. Indeed, poststructuralism seemed only the most prominent representative among an ensemble of interpretative discourses – among them Bloomian influence (Straus 1990, Korsyn 1991), Adornian negative dialectics (Paddison 1993) and Habermasian communicative action (Williams 1997) – likely to enhance an understanding of the postmodern condition and music's place within it. For my own part, the extension of deconstructive work as a means of demystifying Schoenberg's aesthetic theology, both singularly (Street 2000) and as part of a polyphonic tracing of the newest criticism (Street 1996), appeared the most appropriate course to follow. However, while the writings of, for example, Lawrence Kramer began to exploit an apparently inexhaustible flow of hermeneutic productivity, the impression that only a limited form of institutionally-sanctioned change would ever eventuate became almost impossible to ignore.

Kramer himself identified the 1988 meeting of the American Musicological Society in Baltimore as the site of the creation myth for what later became known as the 'New Musicology'. There, he asserted, "the conceptual innovations that had long since shaken up literary and social theory and philosophy finally crossed – or collided – with the familiar positivism and formalism of musical scholarship" (Kramer 1992: 5). It is perhaps a form of shorthand that led Kramer to disregard this meeting as a joint event also involving the Society for Music Theory. However, the point of elision remains indicative for the manner by which the potential for a fully reflexive encounter with the practice of close reading was supplanted by a precipitate reattachment to the contemporary critical canons of race and gender. That the prospects for emancipation and empowerment already conformed to a predominantly North American agenda could be gauged by the extent to which class – with the possible exception of popular music studies – was largely subordinated. Thus an essay collection such as Ruth Solie's *Musicology and Difference* (Solie 1993) chose to frame its engagement with alterity through the subtitle *Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*. And rather than get out from under the legacy of music theory through negotiation, her introduction reiterated an increasingly pervasive disregard for "traditional musical analysis [as ...] one of the most aggressively universalizing discourses still in common use" (Solie 1993: 8, n. 24).

To all intents and purposes, I would suggest, English-speaking musicology's encounter with deconstruction never really took place. Critiques from within such as that by Nattiez against "the hermeneutics of Undecidability" (Nattiez 1993: 272) were generally ignored. Affirmative statements such as Kevin Korsyn's seeking to align de Man's demystification of aesthetic ideology with Terry Eagleton's materialist criticism (Korsyn 1993) likewise experienced a restricted circulation, no doubt perceived to be part of the problem rather than solution in as much their problematising effect could be dismissed as a formalist programme, itself further discredited by association with de Man's wartime journalism. Music theory was not the only non-literary sphere to develop a critical dimension linked to de Man's work during the 1980s and 1990s; as Hal Foster relates in his 1996 study *The Return of the Real*, both Craig Owens and Benjamin Buchloh identified the metonymic effects of allegory during this time as a means of tracing a textualising drive at work within contemporary visual art. For musicology, however, detailed exploration seemed unwarranted. Hence the plenary discussion of the de Man case led by Carolyn Abbate at the Oxford Music Analysis Conference in 1988 finds only a brief post-echo in her book *Unsung Voices* of 1991, such that de Man's belief in music as the paradigmatic allegorical medium is taken as an aestheticised platitude reliant on the nineteenth-century conception of its nature as pure form.

The response within literary studies to de Man's legacy has understandably been far more involved. Writing in homage in 1984 (Derrida 2001), Derrida, with graceful irony, also refers to de Man's preoccupation with music, noting that the component which supports the bridge of stringed instruments and therefore effects the essential spacing that allows the two sounding boards to communicate is known in French by the work *âme*, or soul. Commenting in 1989 following publication of texts produced in the wake of de Man's wartime articles coming to light, Eagleton is even-handed in balancing the former's resolute blindness to the importance of emancipatory politics against a "philosophical acumen and strenuous originality of thought" (Eagleton 2005: 156) committed to the exposure of totalising, teleological and organicist habits of mind. Other commentators have been concerned to separate de Man as primary representative of deconstruction in America from Derrida's own legacy. Thus for Richard Rorty, deconstruction is uninteresting while it aspires to be one more species of antifoundationalism, yet far more compelling in the guise of Derrida's readings of the idealist and phenomenological traditions that he tropes as a distinctively comic writer. By comparison, de Man remains wedded to a belief in deconstruction as negative theology, a form of mourning for divine absence whose characteristic tone "mixes elegy with polemic" (Rorty 1989: 209). More self-defeatingly, Rorty contends, de Man also

needs the discourse of Cartesian philosophy – with its talk of immediate knowledge, self-validating intuitions, and all the rest of it – to remain intelligible and *nonenigmatic*. He needs it to remain intelligible in order to contrast the way language works from the way 'the phenomenal world' works (and, indeed, to make sense of the notion of the 'phenomenal' – what appears to the senses, what is present to consciousness, etc.). (Rorty 1989: 211)

Since such pragmatist arguments strike at the heart of de Man's deconstructive readings, it is no surprise to find the master trope of aesthetic ideology, organic unity, singled out for special attention. Hence Richard Shusterman finds de Man correct in denouncing the New Critical doctrine that "literary works are organic unities by virtue of some special ontological status" (Shusterman 1989: 104), yet otherwise reliant on a monolithic, univocal concept of unity that dogmatically ignores the tension of oppositions at work within organic wholes. Norris and Jonathan Culler are similarly upbraided for a puritanical prejudice against aesthetic richness, a condition whose potential solace is otherwise gratefully preserved by the pragmatist conviction that all facts ultimately "dissolve into interpretations" (Shusterman 1989: 109).

Although avowedly non-theoretical, arguments of this kind may be seen to have transferred more or less explicitly into several more recent commentaries on the topic of musical unity. Appearing as it did in the symposium *Rethinking Music*, published in 1999, an essay collection seemingly intended to address the pre-millennial status of Anglo-American musicology through its two principal discourses reflexive at the levels of work (analysis) and world (ethnomusicology), Fred Everett Maus's "Concepts of Musical Unity" marks a clear disciplinary shift away from poststructuralist literary thought. Maus's account is openly indebted to the work of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. Furthermore, by equating unity with the nature of listening, Maus is also given to locate its effects "in a particularized, contingent event, rather than an ontologically and experientially mysterious 'work' or 'composition'" (Maus 1999: 180). While some sense of postmodern relativity might be thought to rest on this assertion, Maus is careful to relegate any such supposition to a footnote (as indeed he is the work of both Korsyn and myself). The attention he pays to the vocabulary associated with the idea of unity – coherence, completeness, comprehensiveness, fusion, integrity, integration, logic, synthesis, totality and so on – proves

illuminating. Yet, for a commentary so strongly motivated by the immediacy of experience, the narrative makes no attempt to explore this in detail, nor to relate it to any specific auditory event.

By comparison, Robert P. Morgan's 'The Concept of Unity and Music Analysis' (Morgan 2003) is committed to demonstrating how counter-readings of five examples chosen to exemplify structural discontinuity – by Joseph Dubiel, Jonathan Kramer, Kevin Korsyn, Daniel Chua and Kofi Agawu – effectively disable themselves. In Morgan's view, all five examples can be shown to maintain a convincing formal-syntactic coherence. Conversely, and despite the problematising strategies variously put forward by Derrida, de Man, Barthes, Pierre Macherey and Mieke Bal,

simply to claim that a composition lacks unity [...] is only to say that it fails, leaving it indistinguishable from any others that fail. Though this is apparently not the intention of the analyses considered here, it seems to be their necessary consequence. Put differently, the mere claim that a composition lacks unity necessarily silences the analyst. (Morgan 2003: 27)

In conclusion, Morgan observes that both Michel Foucault (interpreting Flaubert) and Barthes (interpreting Balzac) are given to celebrate the formal connections that hold their chosen texts together. Moreover, the preference for discontinuity not only marks a simple inversion of the existing order, he argues, but also extols "a universalist commitment to anti-unitarianism as applicable to any music" (Morgan 2003: 43).

Placed on the defensive to this degree, it would seem that poststructuralism presently carries little if any live critical charge for music studies. Yet two further deconstructive readings – by Craig Ayrey of Webern's Second Cantata Op. 31 (Ayrey 2002), and Raymond Monelle of music by Bach and Charles Ives (Monelle 2000) – indicate that its recursive effects can still be traced to impressive effect. In Ayrey's virtuoso interpretation, the antinomy of law and freedom named by the Platonic signifier *Nomos* (a term Webern himself approved) is shown to radiate throughout the serial structure of the Cantata's fourth movement, *Leichteste Bürden der Bäume*. In sum, Webern's *Nomos* "defines a decisive moment in the deconstruction of totally administered musical structure, the moment when the challenge to the domination of law from expressivity contains a quasi-ethical sense of responsibility to the law" (Ayrey 2002: 296). Likewise, Monelle advocates the practice of close reading, but here through the intertextual correspondences linking two Bach fugues, BWV901 in F major, and BWV886 in A flat major. In both, the emblematic status of the chromatic descending fourth, or *passus duriusculus* figure, is taken to signify a deconstructive relationship between introversive and extroversive semiosis, between the treatment of dissonance as an aspect of compositional craft, and the function of chromaticism as the expression of a "fervid penitence" (Monelle 2000: 201). This essential tension is further heightened by virtue of the metonymic association of the same component with an urbane trio sonata subject. Yet in charting the allegory of listening within which "the abstract gesture which is rooted in dance and the referential syntagm with its history in song" are articulated (Monelle 2000: 206), Monelle is also preoccupied with revealing "the world beyond the frame" (Monelle 2000: 205). In this regard, the music of Ives is posited as a decisive counter to the utopian vision of musical modernity sustained by Schoenberg and Adorno. For Monelle, the sheer randomness of Ives's scores exposes any residual conception of the work as a reflexive totality to be nothing more than an evident fetish. Hence the purpose of his argument is less to surrender Adorno to his more complacent conservative critics such as Roger Scruton, but rather to celebrate the programmatic subversion of the "capitalist art-economy" (Monelle 2000: 219) that arises from Ives's music despite his own professional blindness to the contrary.

Monelle's thesis is trenchant in substance, if not altogether in tone. Yet if he might appear to misrepresent the passion of the sign as a purely propagandist impulse, it is salutary to note, with Foster, that art-critical appropriations of poststructuralism could be thought to have failed to the extent that aporetic doubt was permitted to displace any sustained analysis of art's position within the political economy. In short, appreciation of the effect of a destabilising textuality does not absolve us from the need to distinguish between "*critics* of the reification and fragmentation of the sign", and "*connoisseurs* of this same process" (Foster 1996: 96). Appraising the correspondence between music and deconstruction, therefore, it would appear imperative to consider the implications of such processes for the very continuation of meaningful dialogue at a time when the academic status of music seems under threat throughout Europe and beyond.

"For knowing how to learn, and learning how to know", writes Derrida, "sight, intelligence and memory are *not* enough. We must also know how to hear, and to listen" (Derrida 1983: 4). Answering this call indirectly, yet in the affirmative, Alastair Williams contends that

musicology is a fully socialized medium that participates in the construction and negotiation of identity. Like music, musicology does not just reflect what happens elsewhere; it offers ways of inhabiting and shaping the world (Williams 2001: 140).

Nothing in this statement could I disagree with. All the same, the micropolitical effects of tenure pursuit in the United States, and the state-sponsored Research Assessment Exercise operative across all disciplines within the United Kingdom, both still conspire to exert pressures that either distort or drown out such empowering potential. "Desiring to remove the university from 'useful' programs and from professional ends", writes Derrida, "one may always, willingly or not, find oneself serving unrecognized ends, reconstituting powers of caste, class, or corporation" (Derrida 1983: 18). Here, Kevin Korsyn accepts the challenge of mediation, advising that "since music has always had an ambiguous location in the university, never fully legitimate, never quite at home, we might now exploit our marginality and embrace it" (Korsyn 2003: 183). Picking up on the Fordist principles that underpin the corporatist model of the university, Korsyn questions the institutionalised logic of both peer review and professionalised tenure, supposing that institutional patterns might indeed be rebuilt in a way that would resist the progressive commodification of knowledge. Philip Bohlman, Ellen Koskoff and David Lewin are variously taken to provide "suggestive models for how we might negotiate among different sociocultural languages" (Korsyn 2003: 187). However, it is to be hoped that the related image of a contested "agonistic space" (Korsyn 2003: 187) does not come to equate with a bland apologia for the North American Way. For Derrida, conversely, "thought" requires *both* the principle of reason *and* what is beyond the principle of reason, the *arkhe* and an-archy" (Derrida 1983: 18). So far, we have no answer to the question of what makes music indispensable to the academy. And yet by listening to the message of self-resistance encoded within deconstruction, we may at least begin to find a solution.

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